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An Examination of the Impact of COVID-19 on U.S. Prisons and Jails

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While nothing can completely ameliorate the profound impact COVID-19 has had on institutions and communities, the pandemic does present correctional administrators and policymakers with a unique opportunity to re-envision the future of corrections. This article examines many of the difficulties jails and prisons are encountering in attempting to ensure the safety of inmates and staff, with a focus on those aspects of correctional practice that have contributed to problems and may point the way to reforms that will benefit staff and inmates alike. Among the recommendations here are enhanced transitional services for released inmates, guidelines for social distancing in jail and prison settings, quarantining without punitive measures, improving visitation policies and procedures, democratizing access to health care, and wider adoption of evidence-based practices.